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Industry drawing men off
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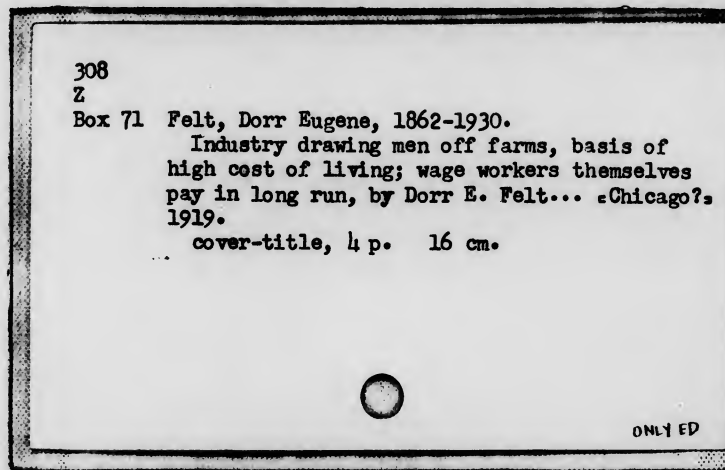
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Industry Drawing Men
Off Farms, Basis of
High Cost of
Living

Wage Workers Themselves
Pay in Long Run

By DORR E. FELT
President Felt & Tarrant Mfg. Co.

JULY 20, 1919

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Industry Drawing Men Off Farms Basis of High Cost of Living WAGE WORKERS THEMSELVES PAY IN LONG RUN

*By DORR & FELT
President Felt & Tarrant Mfg. Co.*

OUR modern social structure is so complex and each sector of society so inter-related and dependent on others that any disorganization of transportation, industry, labor supply or the supply of raw material, above all of coal, is keenly felt by a large proportion of the population.

For some years the supply of skins and hides from Russia has been cut off. The recent strike in Buenos Aires stopped transportation for three months. The latter being one of the principal remaining sources of our supply of raw hides, the resulting scarcity caused a large increase in the already high cost of shoes in Chicago.

Every Worker Drawn Off Farm Raises Food Cost

High wages paid by the industries during the last decade have drawn the workmen off the farms, and such agricultural production as cannot be carried on principally by machinery has suffered accordingly, resulting in high cost of food.

That the wages paid by industry are above normal and that the movement to the cities is not wholly caused by the attractiveness of

city life is evidenced by the fact that where coal mines are opened up in a farming country it is often impossible to get the farms worked because wages paid in the mines are more profitable than working on a farm.

Owners of good farms in northern Indiana are letting them go fallow while they themselves are working in the steel mills, traveling fifteen or twenty miles daily from the mill where they work to the farm where they sleep.

In the face of the facts it is interesting to find politicians and star-gazing theorists talking so much about "Industrial Justice," and to observe the talk about the industrial employees insisting on a new deal following the war.

As a matter of fact, the soldier boys from the farms seem disinclined to go back to the farm and are desirous of casting their lot among the industrial employe class. This is all very nice for the employer, but it all tends to increase the cost of living.

Anything which effects a dislocation of normal competitive operation increases prices. In the long run the consumer pays any increased cost of production.

The great bulk of the consumers are the wage workers themselves, whether it be in the schoolroom, office, store, farm, factory, mill or in the business of transportation. The industrial and transportation workers are better organized than any of the other classes; consequently they profit at the expense of the other classes.

As a gauge of the comparative amount which the industrial wage earner receives, compare the houses and the goods sold and the freedom with which money circulates in a country town, where there are good live factories, with a town not harboring any of the "exploiters of labor."

Employers in the end profit most when wages are high and business brisk because, to them, what they consume—that is, their personal expenditures—are small in comparison to the amount of business they do.

Organized Levy Toll on the Unorganized

If all the classes of wage workers were organized, no one class would have an advantage because there would be no unorganized classes to contribute the toll levied by the organized.

I suppose the Socialist would advance socialism as a remedy, but government ownership or operation is not likely to appeal very strongly to those who have had experience with it. I don't think the mail carriers, on whose backs the government loaded the parcel post packages so it could make a showing in comparison to the express companies, are very enthusiastic about socialism.

Last spring, in England, many men, high and low, were arguing against private ownership and industrial operation, using the extremely salty bacon which the Chicago packers were sending over there as an example of the evils of private ownership and operation.

They didn't know that the bacon was so salty because the British government speci-

fied just how much salt and other preservatives should be used and that it was not due to any desire of the packers to sell salt for bacon. It rather was due to the desire of the government to insure that no food would spoil.

"Back to the Farm," Europe's Best Slogan

The best condition for all is when every acre of land is growing food and every man in the country is working. Some countries cannot raise enough to feed themselves; so they must manufacture more goods than they use and trade them in foreign countries for food.

In view of that fact I shall be very interested to see how the peoples of some of the European countries who are talking about a better social order, come out in the end with their Utopian ideas. My opinion is that the only ones who will profit by the "new order of things" will be those who work very little with their heads and their hands, but a great deal with their mouths.

The resources of the United States, the organizing and business ability of the Americans, and the good sense of the American working man will probably enable us to get back on a normal basis without anybody really suffering, but I am not so optimistic about the situation in Europe, where all sorts of wild and illogical ideas are so prevalent just now.

However, in the ordinary course of events there will elapse some years of industrial prosperity in America before the reaction comes.

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